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Muraco School project on the move as MSBA invites Winchester into next round

CHRIS STEVENS | CORRESPONDENT

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Winchester has been invited to the Massachusetts School Building Authority program. School officials are now working to meet the eligibility requirements for a new Muraco School. WINCHESTER NEWS FILE PHOTO

It might not seem obvious since there are no shovels in the ground or designs plans to decipher, but the Muraco Elementary School pr nonetheless on the move

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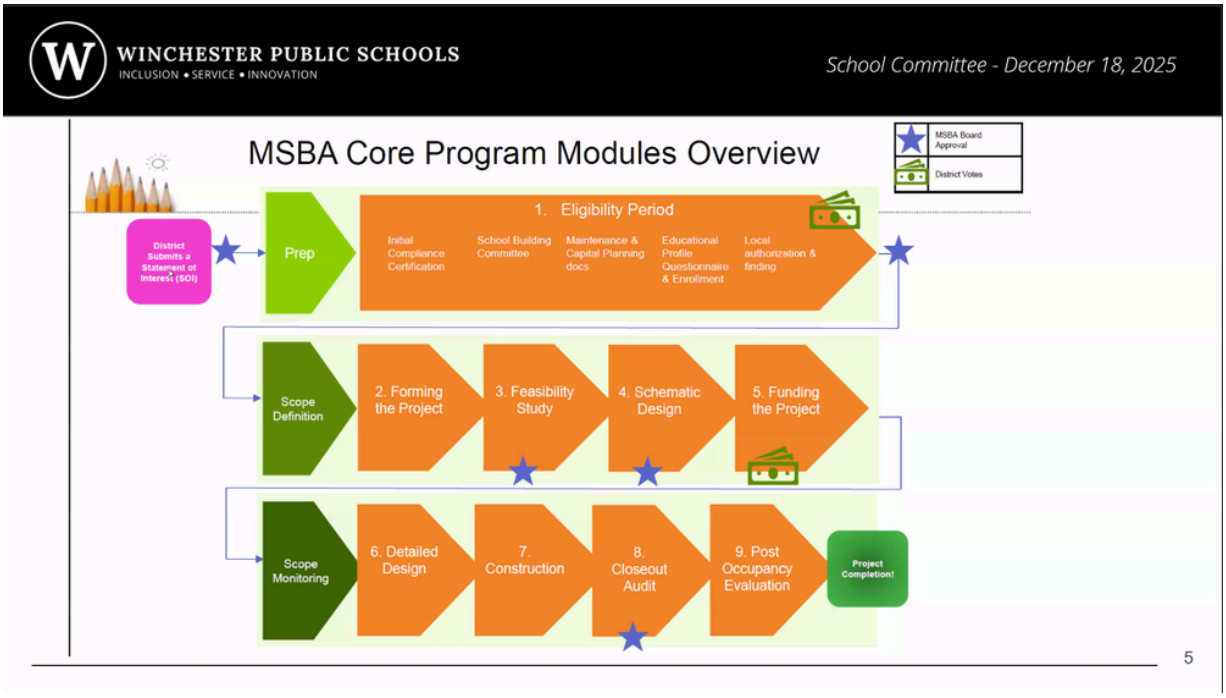
"We're kind of into it now," said Superintendent Dr. Frank Hackett in a recent update to the School Committee. "We were able to attend the [Massachusetts School Building Authority] board meeting last week at which they voted unanimously to invite us into the program."

The MSBA works with communities to plan, design and build, or sometimes renovate schools and they provide funding to support those projects. The state invited the district into the eligibility period, the first module of what is typically a lengthy process to get to a new building.

Hackett reminded the committee that when they were going through the process with the Lynch School, everything seemed to take a very long time.

"Then it seemed like out of nowhere, it just opened up," he said. "We'll have a similar experience, I'm sure, with Muraco."



An overview of the MSBA process for building a new Muraco School. COURTESY PHOTO/WINCHESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A timeline of sorts

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The initial eligibility phase of the Muraco School project will begin sometime in March, Hackett noted. Once started, the district will have 270 days to complete all of the requirements of the eligibility period before it can move into the next phase, which is feasibility, he said.

Some of those requirements include forming a School Building Committee, pulling together maintenance and capital planning documents, educational and enrollment profiles and securing local authorization and funding.

Hackett said determining enrollment is key.

“It is the number one driving factor for what the size of the building and what the square footage will be and then ultimately, obviously, the cost,” he said.

He also said he thinks if they can meet all the of the MSBA’s requirements and get community support for the project, ultimately the timeline may be a little shorter than it was for the Lynch School.

And while they have a lot to get in order to get through the eligibility phase, Hackett said it’s important they hit every mark on time.

“We will move as quickly as we can, but yet be thorough,” he said. “We’ll make sure that we have all of the feedback and everything we need to have in place to make it into feasibility because the issue partly with the MSBA is, they don’t meet monthly.”

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Hackett said the MSBA meets several times a year, but it’s not un there to be two or three month gaps in between meetings. So not ready for a meeting could set the project back by a month or two, he said.

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"But we will make our deadlines," he said adding, "so we should be excited."

Committee member Stefanie Mnayarji asked Hackett if it was safe to estimate that shovels might be in the ground in two years.

"Because I know that's a question that's been floating around," she said.

Hackett said original projections, that have been talked about publicly, show that a new, or newly renovated, Muraco could open for the 2030/2031 school year.

"Saying those numbers out loud ... I think I'll be 87," he said with a laugh.

He also said that if everything goes to plan, it's not an unreasonable assumption.

"This is going to be a lot of work between now and next fall, and you know, the first couple of years there won't be shovels in the ground, and nobody's going to see anything going on physically, but just rest assured that there'll be plenty going on in our office," he said.

Keep updated on the project and get some familiar questions answered here.

Chris Stevens is an award-winning journalist who has spent 25 years chasing, editing and photographing stories on the North Shore. She is the co-founder and managing editor of Gotta Know Medford.

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The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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NEWS

Winchester gun owners face new training rules starting April 2

Public safety data How Winchester compares on firearms licenses in comparable Massachusetts communities Active licenses as of Jan. 25, 2025 — Source: Massachusetts Criminal History Systems Board License to carry firearms Firearms identification card Winchester and Marblehead are the focus communities. Peers selected based on comparable population size, demographics and suburban

WILL DOWD | STAFF WRITER

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